JAPANESE FAIRY TALES.

Second Series, No. 1

THE GOBLIN SPIDER

T. Hasegawa, Publisher, Tokyo.

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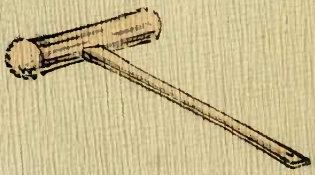

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THE GOBLIN SPIDER.

RENDERED INTO ENGLISH
BY LAFCADIO HEARN.

IN very ancient books it is said that there used to be many goblin-spiders in Japan.

Some folks declare there are still some goblin-spiders. During the daytime they look just like common spiders; but

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very late at night, when everybody is asleep, and there is no sound, they become very, very big, and do awful things. Goblin-spiders are supposed also to have the magical power of taking human shape — so as to deceive people. And there is a famous Japanese story about such a spider.

THERE was once, in some lonely part of the country, a haunted temple. No one could live in the building because of the goblins that had taken possession of it. Many brave samurai went

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to that place at various times for the purpose of killing the goblins. But they were never heard of again after they had entered the temple.

At last one who was famous for his courage and his prudence,

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went to the temple to watch during the night. And he said to those who accompanied him there:—"If in the morning I be still alive, I shall drum upon the drum of

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the temple." Then he was left alone, to watch by the light of a lamp.

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As the night advanced he crouched down under the altar, which supported a dusty image of Buddha. He saw nothing strange and heard no sound till after midnight. Then there came a goblin, having but half

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a body and one eye, and said: "*Hitokusai!*" (There is the smell of a man). But the samurai did not move. The goblin went away.

Then there came a priest

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and played upon a *samisen* so wonderfully that the samurai felt sure it was not the playing of a man. So he leaped up with his sword drawn.

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The priest, seeing him, burst out laughing, and said:—"So you thought I was a goblin? Oh no! I am only the priest of this temple; but I have to play to keep off the goblins.—Does not this *samisen* sound well? Please play a little."

And he offered the instrument to the samurai who grasped it very cautiously with his left hand. But instantly the *samisen* changed into a monstrous spider-web, and the priest into a goblin-

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spider; and the warrior found himself caught fast in the web by the left hand. He struggled bravely, and struck at the spider with his sword, and wounded it; but he

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soon became entangled still more in the net, and could not move.

However, the wounded spider crawled away, — and the sun rose.

In a little while the people came and found the samurai in the horrible web, and freed him. They saw tracks of blood upon

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the floor, and followed the tracks out of the temple to a hole in the deserted garden. Out of the hole issued a frightful sound of groaning. They found the wounded goblin in the hole, and killed it.

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